Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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Imagine, you're flying at a height of 34,000 feet somewhere over the Persian Gulf; you see a fighter plane with what appear to be Saudi markings not far off on the port side. Next thing you know, the fellow next to you, with whom you'd been drinking gin and tonic only a moment before, is slumped forward with a machine gun bullet through his heart. The plane's depressurized from the bullet breaking the window but the pilot manages to land. Two are dead from the salvo, which many witnesses aboard your plane agree came from that Saudi plane.

Of course there's a big stink because the dead guys are both American. In the end it turns out that, under certain secret protocols in Saudi law, craft (whether maritime, airborne or terrestrial) suspected of harboring substances forbidden by the Koran, like alcohol, can be subject to "interdiction", i.e. shot up or down. The Saudi pilot claimed he'd waggled his wings at the passenger plane, indicating that it should follow him. Only after repeated efforts to signal had he finally fired the fatal salvo.

All a fantasy of course. True, the Saudi royal family doesn't endorse public consumption of alcohol, but it isn't in the business of shooting down booze-laden planes, however well informed the Saudi Royal Air Force might be about the consumption of gin aboard the suspect plane. And who knows, the Saudi royal family might even have reservations about the prudence, not to mention legality, of firing on civil aircraft.

But suppose the drug in question isn't booze but cocaine. And suppose the shooter's sponsor and legal protector isn't the puny Saudi royal family but the Government of the United States?

In that case we have as policy guide the decision memorandum signed by President Bill Clinton in June of 1994, bringing "closure", to use a fashionable term, to acrimony within the administration on this issue. The documents in question are all available from the National Security Archive, whose Kate Doyle sued for them under the Freedom of Information Act.

As the Archive's preamble to the documents narrates, the U.S. began sharing real-time aerial tracking information with Colombia and Peru in July of 1990. When the Colombians told the US they were thinking of a shoot-down policy for suspected drug planes, the US State Department got nervous about possible legal ramifications if US advisors were involved, as they undoubtedly would be.

Peru adopted a force down policy in 1993, and at the end of that year the Colombians (probably after back-channel prodding from the US shoot-down faction) said they would now implement the shoot-down strategy formulated in 1990. A U.S. interagency group began a review of the new policies in January 1994. On May 1 the Clinton administration, led by the Department of Defense, announced a suspension on the sharing of real-time aerial tracking data with the two governments.

This was the signal for savage hand-to-hand bureaucratic combat inside the US government. In the end Clinton characteristically tried to please both factions, while going along with the hawks. On June 21, l994, he secretly okayed US cooperation with Colombia and Peru's shoot-down/force-down policy, allowing US aerial track-

(**Drug War** continued on page 6)

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Our Little Secrets

Things You Can't Say in America

It doesn't matter how many times you prove it. Wait five years and you have to prove it all over again. Take Pearl Harbor. The fact that FDR knew the Japanese were going to attack is something that should by now be as solidly established in American historiography as William Randolph Hearst's famous order to his photographer, "You furnish the pictures, I'll furnish the war", (the conflict under discussion being the Spanish American war).

John Flynn made a sound case for Roosevelt's foreknowledge in 1946. Relying on public documents, the historian Charles Beard did it magisterially in 1948, with his FDR and the Coming of the War 1941. John Toland wrapped it with Infamy in the early 1980s. John Stinnett made the case all over again a year ago with Day of Deceit. We can guarantee to you that about five years down the road, after the National Archives have released another truckload of documents, someone will triumphantly write that the case has "finally been made", and someone else will be whining that "once again the conspiracy mongers are at work".

There's no mystery as to why this should be. As Flynn and Beard both understood, FDR's manipulation of the attack on Pearl Harbor goes to the very heart of executive abuse of the warmaking power. No matter how mountainous the evidence, the case will always officially be "non proven", "a conspiracy theory".

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Assassination as Policy

For the same reason, despite a hundred proofs, it remains officially "non proven", time and time again, that US leaders order the assassination of foreign leaders. By now, it should be as soundly based in American historiography as…as…Johnson's manipulation of the Tonkin Gulf incident in the Vietnam War that the White House requisitioned (with only partial success) the deaths of Trujillo,Lumumba, Castro, the Diem brothers, Chou En Lai, Qaddafi, and perhaps even the Swedish leftish prime minister, Olof Palme, though this one has never been properly mooted.

But because the actual practice of executive assassination runs counter to every official pretension of US honor and fair dealing, instances of its use or intended use have to be discounted. It's like torture, as a tool of US foreign policy in the field. Another no-no.

Other examples? The role of the CIA in supervising and protecting smugglers of cocaine into this country in the 1980s, as described in our book Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press. Even though the CIA's Inspector General issued reports ratifying the validity of these charges, the average press story will, to this day, refer to "vague charges never conclusively established."

Beard's Fate

The fate of Charles A. Beard teaches us the cost that challenges of these core Lies of State can extort. Earlier in the 20th century, Beard was the cynosure of American historiography. Books such as his Economic Interpretation of the Constitution and Rise of American Civilization were among the most influential of this century. But they were respectable. They did not challenge core beliefs. The 1910 edition of his textbook American Government and Politics snooted isolationist ideas and talked placidly of cooperation with other power in "military expeditions".

By the 1930s Beard was changing. In 1936 he was writing that "Having rejected the imperialist 'racket' and entertaining doubts about our ability to make peace and goodness prevail in Europe and Asia, I think we should concentrate our attention on tilling our own garden." His last two books, American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940 and the above-mentioned FDR and the Coming of the War 1941 were written to prove that though the "appearance" of FDR's foreign policy was the pursuit of peace, the reality was the quest for war.

The liberals who had hailed him in earlier decades turned upon him with a vengeance. In June,1948, The Nation entrusted Perry Miller, eminent professor of history at Harvard, with the urgent task of demolishing Beard's FDR and the Coming of the War 1941. Miller dutifully fell to his task, in a 700-word dismissal which ignored Beard's painstaking documentation and concluded thus, "As must every historian of this generation, I account myself a child of Beard. But in the presence of this work I can only pray to whatever divinity presides over the profession that I may not grow old and embittered and end by projecting my personal rancor into the tendency of history."

Frida Kirchwey, editor of The Nation, felt that Beard required another, more extended thrashing and assigned Perry Miller the task of a longer profile of Beard. In September of 1948, after homage to Early Beard, Miller sank talons of venom into Late Beard, reporting that "his friends plead that his deafness and isolation on a Connecticut farm shut him off from conversation, and that he nursed the scorpions of spiritual loneliness... He played into the isolationist line and into the party line. One can understand why, and even admire the massive sincerity, but somewhere in his mind was wanting a principle of coherence and perspective…" Summoning every nuance of contemptuous Harvard urbanity, Miller concluded that "When it became necessary to expand the conception of reality to deal with a world process, it was Beard's mouth that worked by ancient memories, and the prophet of inexorable realities was left denouncing the history he had done so much to create."

Mark the crucial phrases, articulated by Miller amid the rise of the Cold War and the National Security State, "When it became necessary to expand the conception of reality to deal with a world process…" And he was right. Was not Beard a traitor to the intellectual duties of any

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And what did that liberal-left publication The Nation think of the fire-bombing of Tokyo, not to mention the dropping of the A-bomb?

properly compliant professor of history? He most certainly was. Gazing upon the newly emerging National Security State, Beard argued that when it came to Pearl Harbor and the entry of the US into the Second World War the ends did not justify the means. He concluded thus: "In short, with the Government of the United States committed under a so-called bipartisan foreign policy to supporting by money and other forms of power for an indefinite time an indefinite number of other governments around the globe, the domestic affairs of the American people became appendages to an aleatory expedition in the management of the world…. At this point in its history the American Republic has arrived under the theory that the President of the United States possesses limitless authority publicly to misrepresent and secretly to control foreign policy, foreign affairs and the war power." What did Beard mean by "aleatory"? The Latin word "alea" means dice or chance, the whim of the Gods, and Beard was alluding to the captious wing of imperialism.

WAR IN THE PACIFIC

Just as FDR's foreknowledge of the Pearl Harbor attack is rediscovered every few years, so too is the fact that the Pacific war was a very nasty affair. At the start of June the British Observer reported on a tv series to be broadcast on Britain's Channel 4, "containing disturbing and previously unseen footage from the Second World War which had languished forgotten in archives for 57 years. The images are so horrific senior television executives had to be consulted before they were considered fit for broadcast."

There's combat film of American soldiers shooting wounded Japanese and of using bayonets to hack at Japanese corpses while looting them. "Former servicemen interviewed by researchers spoke of the widespread practice of looting gold teeth from the dead - and sometimes from the living."

The archival film is fresh evidence of the atrocities, but the atrocities themselves are an old story, best told by John Dower in his 1986 book War Without Mercy. In the February, 1946, issue of The Atlantic the war correspondent Edgar L. Jones wrote, "We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the dying in a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers."

By the spring of 1945 the Japanese military had been demolished. The disparities in the casualties figures between the Japanese and the Americans are striking. From 1937 to 1945, the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy suffered 1,740,955 military deaths in combat. Dower estimates that another 300,000 died from disease and starvation. In addition, another 395,000 Japanese civilians died as a result of Allied saturation bombing that began in March 1945. The total dead: more than 2.7 million. In contrast, American military deaths totaled 100,997. Even though Japan had announced its intentions to surrender on August 10, this didn't deter the bloodthirsty General "Hap" Arnold. On August 14, Arnold directed a 1,014-plane air raid on Tokyo, blasting the city to ruins and killing scores of thousands. Not one American plane was lost and the unconditional surrender was signed before the planes had returned to their bases.

This raid, as much as the dropping of the A bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was aimed at Moscow as well as Japan, designed to impress Stalin with the implacable might of the United States. The Cold War was under way and as Beard wrote in 1948, democracy wilted amid the procedures of the national security state, whose secretive malpractices are still being exhumed.

And what did that liberal-left publication The Nation, think of the firebombing of Tokyo, not to mention the dropping of the A bombs? The Nation's editor Frieda Kirchwey, unburdened by deafness or seclusion on a Connecticut farm like Beard, was ecstatic, not only about the A bombs but about what she called (in March, 1945) "the five great incendiary attacks on Japan's chief cities". She lauded "the fearsome gasoline-jell M-69 incendiary", reporting to her readers that "the bomb weighs six pounds, burns for eight to ten minutes at above 3000 degrees Fahrenheit and clings 'tenaciously to any surface'", which sounds as though she was relaying a War Department press release. Kirchwey applauded these incendiaries as "especially effective in cities where so many buildings house subassembly benches for war production."

"Subassembly benches for war production." So much for the paper and wood houses of Japan's civilian population. Small wonder Kirchwey saw Beard as the enemy.

To be fair to Kirchwey, by the time the Korean war came along she was having second thoughts about the A-bomb, attacking the destruction of Korea in a strong editorial in The Nation, published on March 10, 1951.

TOWN SLUR

More than one CounterPuncher has enquired why, in a story on Timothy McVeigh's early years, we casually referred to his spell of employment in "the awful, racist upstate New York town of Cheektowaga". For example, Joy Matkowski e-mailed us thus: "A quick internet search told me it has a Borders and a great many Catholic churches but nothing that indicated such a shameful history." In mid-May we got a call from an amiable fellow who identified himself as Dennis Gabryszack, and then added smoothly, "town supervisor of…" you've guessed it, Cheektowaga. Dennis is effectively the mayor.He put up a stout defense of his bailiwick, noting that unlike the Reagan years in which McVeigh had experienced the recession of the North East in Cheektowaga, his town, pop. 100,000, now has an unemployment rate of 4 per cent.

And who cast those slurs upon Cheektowaga? None other than CounterPuncher JoAnn Wypijewski, who grew up in Buffalo. "Cheektowaga", she tells us, "is no more racist than other Buffalo suburbs. It just happened to be the suburb I grew up near, during the race riots in Buffalo and the anti-war movement. It was one of the refuges for white flight from Buffalo. An upstanding citizen of Cheektowaga once said to me, 'Don't think it would be a good idea if all the black people in the Northeast were moved to the Midwest?'" **CP**

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Peyote and the East Village in 1961

How Dylan Found His Voice

BY LENNI BRENNER

I don't say I was Bob Dylan's room mate. Calling someone your room mate means that at least one of us paid rent. It was the winter of 1961. I was crashing at banjo-picker Paul Shoenwetter's pad on East Fourth Street between Avenue C and D, in what is now called the East Village, but which we knew as the Lower East Side, along with Vince Hickey, a jazz drummer, and Tom Condit, a socialist buddy, when St. Paul brought in yet another stray.

Vince married black, to the daughter of Victoria Spivey, an ol' timey blues singer. He was an encyclopedia on ragtime. Tom and I were up to our asses in the civil rights struggle. Bob, at 19, going on 20, 4 years younger than me, was our junior colleague. He couldn't be expected to say much that was new or interesting or amusing to us worldlings. However we recognized a marvelous musician, and welcomed him into our fraternity of the rebellious, brilliant and crazy.

The highpoint of one chat is chiseled into stone. Peyote was still legal. The problem was that it tasted like tiger piss going down. Then it upset your stomach. But that's the best news it ever had. That meant the veggie was kickin' in. It gave me spectacular eyes-closed color visions and the tummy-ache vanished.

Tom processed some. He ground-up a batch of dried up fist-sized buds, and put the powder into gelatin caps. That solved the taste problem. He laid 50 caps on me and split. I took 30 and was waiting for them to come on, when Bob walked in. I gave him the 20. He downed them, told of a nearby party and left. After my technicolor show came on, I walked over.

I vote the winter of 1961 as New York's greatest. Four fulsome blizzards had left huge mounds everywhere, and then, on Friday night/Saturday morning, February 3-4, another storm dumped 17.4 inches on the city. The total accumulation was the greatest ever. For the first time, the mayor had to ban nonessential traffic so plows could clear a lane down the side streets, with many parked cars buried for months under humongous glaciers. For me, high, those streets with icicles as big as they get, hanging off tenement fire-escapes, were the once-in-eternity Siberia-in-the-Apple, well past any piddling prophet's paltry Paradise.

The party was at the home of Village Voice cartoonist Jules Feiffer. Bob was adding whiskey to the peyote, as he, Mark Spoelstra and other folkies played in a back room.

After dawn on Sunday, the 5th, I left for Paul's. I was alone when Bob came in, 20 minutes later. We chatted about the night, and I got on him about a southern song they sang, Just lookin' for a Home. "Bob, you never saw a boll weevil. Mark never did. None of us have. If one flew in the window, or crawled in under the door, or whatever the hell they do, we wouldn't recognize it. Stop singing about boll weevils and sing about your own life and times."

"Bob, you never saw a boll weevil. Stop singing about boll weevils. Sing about your own life and times."

He was slouched on a couch. In a hot second he was upright, his smiling young face suddenly electrically alive: "That's what Joe Williams told me!" His new maturing face mirrored his thinking as the implications of what we said sank in. Others have that experience. Someone tells us something but it doesn't click until someone else slams it in.

It is idle to speculate as to whether Bob could have eventually figured out by himself that he had to do his own thing. I say with certainty that Big Joe and I were, in life, the agencies that propelled him to his destiny. I remember nary another word. But his expressions were unforgettable. Here was the most gifted young musician-poet of his time and place suddenly getting his act together as an adult and performer.

For at least the first minute, almost two, after his exclamation, his thoughts put themselves spontaneously onto his face. His initial reception of my statement was followed by a series of self-induced facial shocks as he silently cooked our old/new ideas in his pot. Then he regained his composure, leaned towards me with his elbows on his thighs and we talked for 2-3 more minutes. Then, as we had been up for a heap of hours, we crashed. There was no doubt that both of us thought a profound thing had happened to him.

Of course I had no idea that he would make such an impact on the world. But that visual scene was hardly one that anyone could forget, even if it happened with a nobody. To be sure, it wasn't quite as if the scales immediately fell from his eyes and he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptized, as with Saul becoming Paul. But through his cogitations he did spring up and go. The few words remembered and circa 10 minutes forgotten are how the mind sometimes turns events into memory. A highlight stands in for a whole conversation. The physical details are so vivid because the night was so spectacular and my vision was keyed up by peyote.

As his career took off shortly after, in the full bloom of our friendship, I had further reason to think about that morning and lock in the incident. I'm sure that he saw it the same way. For the next two years I was his wise buddy who pulled his coat on a crux matter for him as a poet and person. In any case, we got up in the Winter dark. We had no

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After maybe an hour, Dylan felt "a song coming on". "You know I love to hear you say that." I left my buddy pen in hand.

food. Bob cleared out first, saying "I have to do some writing." Yea verily, a bright young fellow came into that pad, a full man went out.

I never asked him what Big Joe actually said. But we get the spirit of it in Robert Shelton's No Direction Home. Williams recalled that "Bob...wrote me thanking me for the advice I had given him about music. What he earned, what he done, he got it honest. They ask me: 'Is he real?' And I tell them that they should let him live his own life."

Being in on the pad's chats, he understood my "sing about your own life and times" to be more ideologically loaded than Williams' "live his own life". I was also able to musically critique him because I had heard many of the best folksingers of the day and had listened to thousands of folk songs on records. In that period, Dave Van Ronk introduced me to Alan Lomax, the great field-collector. After listening to them I read Lomax on the complex stylistic evolution of American folk music. It was obvious to me that what we call the folk music tradition was actually innumerable singers doing the old songs and making up new ones about their lives and times.

The ideological level varied from none to highly political. Some were musically highly cultured via their churches. Accordingly, Bob welded our notions together because I added the obligation that his art should reflect our times — his, Mark's, mine — its experiences and demands, to Williams' down-home blues sagacity.

Yet note again how the kingly power, chance, plays with us. If I had to be ahead of time to drink with Woody, I had to be the 2nd to hit Bob like the sun, moon and stars falling on him. We ran into each other over the next two years, at Gerde's Folk City and other hangouts, notably Dave and Terri Thal's crib. They were fellow Trotskyists. Terri was Bob's first manager. Bob was there, sometime after his return from his 1962 trip to Europe. Boll weevil Bob told me how he didn't like to work in clubs for pay because "the people I want to play for can't afford the admission".

He ground on, all about how his record company took advantage of his youth to screw him financially, and how he had to make bootleg British records as Blind Boy Grunt.

I bumped into him on Sixth Avenue and Waverly in the Village in the spring of 1963. I offered to pay the bill for a coffee. I explained that I had sold a silver goblet boosted from a Reformed Jewish Temple. He smiled and we went to what was then a plain American greasy spoon, now the Waverly Restaurant, got us a table and enjoyed the fruits of what we knew was a crime.

My ex-Christian ex-gal had taken me to a Village Episcopal church. After the ceremony, I went up to the altar and partook of my first communion, without benefit of clergy. I took a wafer from a vessel. Yea, verily, Jerusalem Slim's body is like unto a Napoleon pastry. So, in return for certainty on a subtle point of Christian ritual that had perplexed Jewish minds for centuries, I led her through the open doors of an empty sanctum we happened upon in those innocent, pre-crime wave days, down the aisle and onto the raised rabbi's platform. The ritual goblet held some of what looked like wine, except that it didn't smell of alcohol. Coke, in a sacred vessel before an altar, is, by American law, a religion, to be protected from desecration. Good. Even great. I'm describing a legal transgression that doesn't merit repetition. But, in the real American 20th century, that Temple wasn't Judaism. And in the 21st century Reform ain't even religion. It's what a minority of Jewish kids grow up doing if they live in our secular Coke present, but are hung up on their parents' ancestral religion. A book of proverbial truths, spiritual fantasies and barbaric war stories, also reduced, in the physical world, from the perpetual miracle of intoxicating wine, down to flat soda, in an empty shrine.

Bob approved of the double miracle, the conversion of a profaned vessel into capitalist lucre, and then into coffee and snacks, because he also had a contemptuous familiarity with Reform's instant platitudes.

I don't remember every word that passed between us. I told him I was heading back to the Bay Area and its politics. After maybe an hour he felt "a song coming on." "You know I love to hear you say that." I left my buddy pen in hand.

Shortly after I took off for Berkeley. We've had no contact since. If history records me, it will be as a historian and political activist. Beyond that, my advice to Bob that winter morning will be seen as my proudest artistic contribution. His radical songs will live on. But do a good deed and throw it into the sea. His later theological trapeze act, swinging between Jesus and the late Lubavicher rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, can only be described as the all-time-most-pathetic American Jewish tragi-comedy shtick. CP

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ing data to be used in operations against suspicious aircraft "if the President has determined that such actions are necessary because of the threat posed by drugtrafficking [sic] to the national security of that country and that the country has appropriate procedures in place to protect innocent aircraft."

As one bureaucrat happily noted, this Solomonic compromise would "reduce the [United States government's] exposure to criticism that such assistance violates international law." By the way, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association did think the policy was a lousy idea.

The world took notice in March of this year when a family of evangelical Baptists, having concluded a bout of predatory spiritual rampages among the hapless Indians along the Peruvian Amazon, was halved in size, after a bullet fatally pierced Veronica and Charity Bower (mother and 7-month infant) while wounding Cessna pilot Kevin Donaldson and sparing the Baptist paterfamilias, Jim Bower, and his son Cory.

Magnanimously, Bower he had "no hard feelings" and could see God at work in their deaths from gunfire by the Peruvian air force.

Of course, if an Amazonian Indian shaman had successfully aimed a heat-seeking missile at the Bowers on the very reasonable grounds (sustainable by profuse historical evidence) that the evangelical Baptists were a threat to the national security of his tribe, there would have been no end of trouble for the shaman.

But this was no shaman, this was the Peruvian Air Force, ordered to fire by a high ranking Peruvian officer on the ground. And this was the CIA, in the sub-contracted guise of Aviation Development Corp.Corp, out of Maxwell AFB in Hunstville,Alabama, flying above the Amazon (two Anglos and one Peruvian, not able to talk to each other very well owing to language barriers) telling the Peruvian Air Force that an unidentified plane was approaching Iquitos. And this was long-range US radar based in Vieques, Puerto Rico, advising the CIA subcontractors about the unidentified plane. And this was US Southern Military Command, monitoring the whole scene from its war room in Key West. What a very large mass of people and resources to be watching one small plane which, if you believe Mr Bower, was also being tracked by the mightiest radar of them all, the Big Fellow himself.

In mid-May the Coast Guard made the largest cocaine bust in its history.

It turns out the CIA, the subcontractors, Southcom and Peru have been responsible for downing anywhere from 25 to 30 small planes over the passage of the years since 1994. Who were they? No one seems to know.

Okay. Now you're in your cruise ship, in the Indonesian archipelago, still sipping at your gin and tonic. Muslims board the boat, ransack your possessions. Yes, they're dead set against booze…

We'll cut the satirical parable short and remind you that in mid May the US Coastguard ecstatically announced the largest haul in US maritime drug enforcement's history: an alleged $1 billion's worth of cocaine, (13 tons) found after five arduous days' search aboard a freighter in the eastern Pacific, the Svesda Maru, a 152-foot trawler flying the flag of Belize. Two Russians and 10 Ukrainians were charged with drug smuggling and jailed at the federal prison in San Diego.

Count up the seeming breaches of laws and treaties here, starting with piracy on the high seas and use of US Navy ships for law enforcement. But it turns out when US Customs or Coastguard is alerted by the US Navy or Air Force to suspicious craft outside territorial waters, they phone the State Department, which phones the nation under whose flag the suspect is floating and gets the green light. So Belize is going to say No?

And just to cope with the Posse Comitatus Act forbidding the US military to be involved in civil law enforcement, there was a Coastguard unit aboard the Navy's ship. No need to guess about the likelihood of a fair trial for those Russians and Ukrainians now in the federal pen in San Diego.

Want to have the spring's drug headlines wrapped up for you? The US Supreme Court defies the clear intent of voters in nine states and says medical marijuana is a no no and a London newspaper reports that in London in 1995 a gram of cocaine cost around $120, but the same amount can now be picked up for about $80. The new drug czar, John Walters, picked after three months by former cocaine dealer George Bush (at Yale, in ounce bags, according to one source) says the war on drugs can be won.

Gin and tonic, anyone? **CP**

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How Bob Dylan Gave Up Singing About Boll Weevils

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